

THE CEA CRITIC

Vol. No. XXI—No. 8—Published at Springfield, Mass. Editorial Office, University of Mass., Amherst, Mass. November, 1959

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION, INC.

Twenty-first Annual Meeting

THE PALMER HOUSE, CHICAGO, ILL.

Monday, 28 December

4:15 p.m.—Registration, Grand Ballroom Foyer.

4:30 p.m.—General Meeting, Grand Ballroom Foyer. Open to all interested persons. Topic: "Scholarship and Poetry." Chairman: Harry T. Moore, South Illinois University, Vice-President, CEA. Speaker: John Ciardi, Rutgers University, Poetry Editor, *Saturday Review*, President CEA., "How Does a Poem Mean Man?"

6:45 p.m.—Quadrangle Club, 1155 E. 57th St., social hour, dinner, and Annual Meeting. Topic: "What is past is Prologue."

Tuesday, 29 December

7:30 p.m.—Stouffer's Restaurant, 111 So. Wabash. Breakfast program for Regional CEA leaders. Patrick G. Hogan, Chairman; Donald A. Sears, Upsala College, Coordinator for Regional Affairs. Subject: "A Look Ahead—CEA Regionals in the Next Decade." John Ciardi, Donald Lloyd, Max Goldberg, John Hicks.

LOCAL CEA COMMITTEE

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CEA headquarters will be maintained, December 27-29, in the Palmer House. Members and friends are cordially invited to drop in.

The services of the CEA Bureau of Appointments, which functions on a twelve-month basis under the direction of Albert Madeira, will be available at the Palmer House. The only charge for Bureau registrants, who should be CEA members, is \$5.00 for a twelve-month period. The services are free to prospective employers. To ensure close cooperation between the MLA and the CEA, the CEA Bureau of Appointments will staff a desk in the interview room of the MLA Faculty Exchange in The Palmer House.

Improving American Literature Anthologies

Examining a popular one-volume anthology of American literature, I learn that the McCormick reaper was invented in 1834, that the Gasden Purchase took place in 1853, and that Custer was defeated by the Indians in 1876. Turning to an even more popular two-volume anthology of American literature, I learn that New Orleans was founded in 1718, Arkansas was admitted to the Union in 1836, and Michigan was admitted to the Union in 1837.

Grateful as I am for such information, I think the precious space in these and other anthologies of American literature could be utilized more effectively if lengthy chronological tables were sharply reduced and the pages thus gained were devoted to more purely literary matters. Additional space might also be obtained by omitting bibliographies clearly designed for graduate students from anthologies clearly designed for sophomores. The more esoteric bibliographies have their value, especially for teachers, but in a compact work one must decide upon the relative worth of material to the reader. The average sophomore will derive more benefit from a reading list of twentieth century American plays than he will from information about Charles Evans' *American Bibliography* and the Duyckinck brothers' *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*.

ture.

In the space made available, the anthologist might furnish a glossary of commonly used literary terms: allegory, symbolism, irony, plot, and the like. Particularly useful would be a concise explanation of the principles of versification, something that is generally included in anthologies of English literature but which rarely, if ever, gets into anthologies of American literature. And yet students, particularly those not majoring in literature, need simple explanations of the different kinds of meters and rhythms, a rudimentary classification of poetic forms, and extended definitions of alliteration, assonance, metaphor, onomatopoeia, and so on.

Another feature, common enough in anthologies of English literature, that I would like to see in American collections is the literary map. Since students nowadays cover nearly every section of the United States in their vacations, they might derive more from their reading if they would inspect, say, the Mark Twain birthplace in Florida, Missouri, or the Wadsworth-Longfellow house in Portland, Maine, when they are in those areas. The first step in getting them to visit such places would be to show them where the literary shrines are on a map.

Because of the large number of authors

(Please turn to p. 4)

MEMO TO COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Dear Sir:

As president of our college and an active participant in affairs academic, you are doubtless more aware than I of the growing concern for the plight of education in the United States today. From kindergarten to the doctorate, every level feels the barbs of critical attack. The full story of this assault will one day fill many chapters, to which I would like to contribute but one small item in this memorandum.

The college chapter contains, at one and the same time, the most complex and the most urgent problems. Some of these are recent in origin; not a few have persisted *sub campo* far too many years. Please do not get alarmed: I have no intention of arousing all the drowsy dogs that loll beneath the ivy. As a matter of fact, I have only one thing to say. Now I ask only your indulgence while approaching the issue in my own way.

Among your compeers it is generally agreed that college enrollments are going to mount steadily in the immediate future. Universities with twenty-thousand students today anticipate double that number within a decade. Small colleges everywhere are waging fund-raising campaigns for expanding physical plants and increasing staff.

Wholesale experimentation with "educational TV" has already captured academic imagination, and myriad other schemes to cope with a growing student body emerge each term. Virtually every device, every plan is predicted on the assumption that somehow an extension of the present system is the only solution to the crisis. At this point, before these steps are "finalized," perhaps it would be wise to pause to examine a few matters.

Like yourself, not a few persons, educators and parents alike, hold grave doubts whether more "bigness" is the proper solution to our dilemma. And, as you well know, "education" already has become big business. One widespread indication of this trend is the rampant proliferation of non-academic personnel on college staffs across the country. In educational circles, however, as well as in business, there may well be a point of diminishing returns. Whenever a campus reaches its own reasonable limitations of administrative staff, teaching faculty, physical plant, student housing, and all the other components of a residence college, a serious question arises: How can further enrollment be met? If normal growth forces operational expenses to veer

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THE CEA CRITIC

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NEW HORIZONS

In 1950 the leadership of the CEA and the editorship of *The CEA Critic* fell upon the broad shoulders of Maxwell Goldberg of the University of Massachusetts.

Possessed of unbounded enthusiasm and great energy, this gifted and kindly scholar and teacher succeeded in the following years in projecting the CEA into national prominence and in transforming it from a small, somewhat disorganized society into a well-knit, respected, active association that has had a real impact upon our profession.

One of the keys to Max's success has been his executive ability. He knows how to arouse the enthusiasm of others. In a completely democratic way, he discovers talent wherever it exists, and by kindly help, assistance, and praise where needed he gets everyone who can to work for the

CEA. Perhaps most important of all, he never bears a grudge, forgets complaints and insults, and is as likely as not to arouse new idealism and devotion in precisely the man who has been complaining the loudest.

Max has had great faith in the ability of people to learn by discussion and controversy, and in this faith he has edited *The Critic* and led the CEA. We have had no party line or dogmatic position under his leadership, and he has given many shades of opinion a forum. *The Critic*, to cite only one example among many, has presented much excellent material on modern linguistic theory; but it has also not been backward about printing the views of those who have nothing but scorn for the linguists.

This openness to discussion has been misinterpreted by some who long inwardly for a greater absolutism. Occasionally, complaints have been registered that the CEA has imbedded itself in endless and futile controversy. This reaction overlooks the educational value of open discussion.

As the recipient of many long and brilliant directives guiding me in my managing editorship of *The Critic*, I know whereof I speak when I praise Max Goldberg. Never have I worked with a man more willing to slave long and hard over the details of his job, and yet at the same time fuller of wide-ranging and imaginative plans for the future. He has literally made the CEA what it is today.

Among specific achievements of the last decade can be mentioned the strengthening and growth of the regional CEA groups, the recognition of CEA as one of the key national organizations for college English teachers, the holding of a whole series of vigorous and effective national meetings, the development of a working constitution and set of by-laws for our organization, the preparation and training of a group of capable and devoted national officers, and the effective operation of a number of key committees within the CEA.

In addition, of course, Max expanded the impact of the CEA through the spectacular CEA Institutes with other groups of humanities teachers and with influential people outside the profession. This activity has now grown beyond the CEA and has become the American Humanities Center in Amherst.

Through all the years of work and accomplishment Max Goldberg has remained true to the essential spirit of the founding fathers of CEA—the spirit which says that it is essentials which count: ability, talent, living ideas and challenge, not window-dressing and big names. As college teachers of English each trying to do his job as best he can, we pay tribute to the energetic Max who has widened our horizons, taught us to be aware of things we weren't aware of before, and through it all has had complete respect for our individuality and integrity. Higher praise can be given no man.

L. E. H.

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LETTER FROM BOB FITZHUGH

And so I get my Nunc Dimittis. It is always healthy to see oneself as others see one, and I recognize certain features. But 'cantankerous', 'fervent'? A sort of academic evangel? I should prefer 'unillusioned' even 'cynical' (a realistic idealist), and 'direct'. Had you known, you might have mentioned that Burges swore me not to make CEA just another academic society, and threatened to haunt me if I did. I think I kept the faith, and have never felt haunted, although Burges once wrote me that perhaps it was not wise to be so positive, since others might have different opinions. I think I replied, and I certainly announced it often enough, that I would print anything short of treason, and welcome any vigorous expression.

A couple of corrections. I did not keep CEA alive during the war; Burges did. A few days after gasoline rationing was abolished, I set forth in my car to investigate possible green pastures, and on the circuit, visited B. J. in Schenectady. As a result, I eventually received a box of addressograph plates (the membership list) and a folder of MS (enough for a couple of issues of the then-NEWSLETTER). The treasurer, Jess Jackson, had several hundred dollars in the bank. A more realistic account of my tenure might have noted hard-headed concern for finance; and the development of membership and regional groups (by the simple process of letting them develop without answering the question of how it could be done under the constitution). I think I also helped answer the plaintive wail, "Just how is CEA different from NCTE?"

The Appointments Bureau was suggested to me by an attractive young woman member, Joyce Kellogg, who helped me run the operation the year it was tried out first,

in Chicago. Incidentally, Louis Joughin, now with the AAUP office in Washington, and Francis Mineka, now Dean at Cornell, were the first registrants. That was the year of trouble in Texas.

While I was secretary, I got Robert Gay to tell the story of CEA's origins. It appeared in the CRITIC under the heading HOW IT ALL BEGAN. I should like to add a footnote. At the exploratory meeting in the Pennsylvania (now Statler) Hotel in New York, there developed a movement to throttle the upstart before he could make his voice heard. There was a motion, as I remember, or perhaps only a suggestion, that a committee be appointed to consider matters discussed at the meeting, and report. I rose to object that there was no organization to which the committee might report, and that the effect of the motion was to sink the proposed new organization before it could be organized. I therefore moved, and Harlan Hamilton seconded, that a plan of organization be drawn up and presented to a meeting called to consider it during the next MLA meetings, in New Orleans. This motion passed, and after an excellent dinner in an excellent New Orleans restaurant the next year, CEA came into being. (The tradition of excellent CEA dinners in excellent restaurants—not just flossy ones—has been a victim of inflation; with rising academic salaries, perhaps it might be revived.)

From its beginning, I have always felt that CEA was the best instrument to encourage humane teaching of literature, to make it what it should be, an enrichment of the spirit. The antagonism CEA has encountered, and the opposition, has been puzzling, and perhaps significant. Without benefit of Foundations CEA flourished, and I should like to put a hex on those who seem to me sometimes determined to make it just another academic society.

P. S. Where in obscenity did you get the notion that I did not find literature valuable in and for itself? I'm not quite sure what 'in and for itself' means, but I've said often enough that we should read books for what we find in them. And I'd like to ask a favorite question once again: just how do teachers of English justify themselves in coming between a student and his book?

Some Corrections

In my article "The Scholar and (not Versus) the Critic," printed in *The CEA Critic* for September, 1959, I hoped to present a concise and comprehensive definition of the specific differences between literary scholarship and literary criticism. Inadvertently, I hope, your printer has made the necessity for scholarship quite evident. By omitting key phrases from my definition of literary scholarship, he has made me responsible for considerably reducing the scope of scholarship. Here is the text of my definition, at least of those parts in question:

(3) investigation of the sources of the work, that is, the personal motives of its

author and other pertinent biographical data, his use of linguistic and literary materials and forms, his response to social setting, current ideas, audience demands and other relevant information related to genesis and probable intention.

From this section your printer has omitted the following words after response: "to social setting, current ideas, and audience demands." I believe that you will agree that the omission of these words gives a quite erroneous conception of my definition or the scope of scholarship. Also by leaving out the conjunction "and" between on and relationships in the next numbered section of my definition your printer has considerably reduced the precision of what I had to say.

Charles V. Hartung
Univ. of California at L. A.

MAY, 1959

PMLA! Thy Bibliography

Reveals "The Well of English, Now De-filed,"

"Australian Cattle Lingo," notes on Wilde, Dockets "The Dialectical English pie"; Marks for posterity "The Worm as Hero," Lists "Etymology of English haggis," Unearths "A Pun in 'Lycidas.'" Quelle sagesse!

Shows "Fowler's Toils," describes the forms of zero.

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American Literature Anthologies (Continued from p. 1)

coming from the New England area during the American Renaissance, one might well include a special map of Massachusetts on the back endpapers to supplement a literary map of the United States in the beginning of the volume. Unless students grew up in New England, I find they have only the haziest ideas where Concord, New Bedford, Salem, and Plymouth are located.

With an eye to the future, the maker of American literature anthologies should use the space obtained by the omission of less vital matters to print brief lists of books that the student might read when the course is over. After all an anthology should be a seed bed rather than a cemetery. Some anthologists have wisely included lists of important American novels in the appendixes. Though most of these novels will be mentioned in the historical introductions and the biographical prefaces of the texts, the reader cannot take in the titles at a glance, as he can in a list, nor is he so likely to set up a reading plan.

Lists of plays, notable individual short stories, essays, biographies and autobiographies would be just as valuable. A list of immigrant autobiographies (Mary Antin, Marcus E. Ravage, Jacob Riis, Carl Schurz, etc.) would surely do more to stimulate the student than the information (actually supplied) that the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument were dedicated in 1885. I suppose the publishers' fears of advertising the books of competitors and the reluctance to point out quickly the omissions of the textbook explain in part the comparative lack of such useful supplementary material, but I'm sure a demand for such features by teachers would result in their inclusion.

Robert L. Coard
University of Alabama

Memo to College President (Continued from p. 1)

too far out of line with educational costs, something is endemically wrong with the system.

This theme of bigness on the campus could be developed in many ways—most of them deprecatory. Surely exploding the present system is not the answer. In the case of a small college like ours it is not even feasible. Public pressure might force token moves; but grand scale building projects, even wholesale curriculum shifts, are palpably impossible. So far as that is concerned, the "better" college does not even want to lose its identity in an invasion of the province of the university. The liberal arts college, in particular, is convinced that it serves a very special need which it alone can fulfill. It has no desire to be accused of the familiar complaints leveled against the university: the depersonalization of the student, the indifference of the faculty, and all the rest.

On the other hand, this same small, liberal arts college has been perennially

vexed by a number of common problems which show few signs of diminution. Central to most of these is the relative immaturity of the majority of its students. Because the freshman leaves home care at a mere seventeen or eighteen years of age, the college must assume most of his parents' custodial duties in seeing that he set up a workable daily schedule (and adheres to it), that he learn how to study (and studies), that he acquire social graces (and practices them). To motivate this last category alone the college must maintain an extensive (and explosive) adolescent social program consisting of Greek letter societies, hay-rides, record hops, and whatever else a harried dean can devise. In all cases the supervisory responsibilities bring continuous headaches to a sizable contingent of adults who might better use their time and training on matters more academic than dance calendars and pledge parties.

The juvenility of the preponderant underclassmen involves much more than a complex social system. It necessitates (or so goes the tradition) a two-year "P.E." program which generally is little more than the supervised play of grade-school days. It perpetuates those perennial periods of semi-legal border warfare known as "class scraps." It supports that inane ordeal called "Hell Week" which nearly every fraternity seems committed to preserve as part of its initiation ritual. In short, it explains a large part of that continuous round of petty problems which beset college deans, house-mothers, proctors—even presidents.

Every college administrator knows but too well the brutal attrition that thins these underclass ranks during the early years. For reasons ranging from barren economics to the vagaries of "personality adjustment," the casualty rate on every campus is much

higher than even most faculty members suspect—and it will likely go higher. Many of these cases bring heart-ache to everyone involved; all make their scars. How many might be avoided the most elaborate system of Deans-Directors-Counselors will never determine. Despite the heroic efforts of dedicated personnel, the "drop slips" are sure to mount as the problem children increase.

This preponderance of freshmen and sophomores on the campus also has a vital impact upon the college curriculum and the faculty appointed to administer it. Sheer mathematics alone dictates that the very great majority of course offerings must be scaled down to elementary levels. This means, obviously, that most instructional hours and efforts must be devoted to the presentation of material and skills which offer little by way of challenge to an ambitious instructor, much less to an experienced professor. Especially in a small college like ours this presents a serious problem. Since our faculty shifts are relatively few, it often develops that the same person must teach the same basic material in much the same way year upon year. This can be a most stultifying experience, as every department chairman must admit. The specialized interests of young enthusiasts wither beneath freshman themes; the research dreams of eager scholars wilt under sophomore survey quizzes. Ultimately dedication itself falters.

Under such circumstances several inevitabilities ensue. In the first place, advanced courses are sacrificed to make room for elementary classes. Specialized courses to match the specialized interests of both student and teacher give way to "surveys" foredoomed to mediocrity by diversity of both content and interest. Or, in the second place, freshman classes swell into unwieldy

lacuna

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? HOW IS IT PRONOUNCED? WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

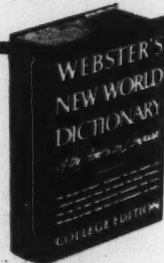
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lecture sections bereft of any personal relationship between student and teacher, and no opportunity is left the student for self-expression or class contribution. Most important, however, is the academic atrophy which threatens the faculty member. Bored with trivia, weary of repetition, haunted by elusive misgivings, small wonder if he turns cynical about his role in the drama of education which he has heard so much about. Small wonder he loses conviction in his own intellectual integrity, imagination in conceiving new ideas, enthusiasm for initiating new ideas.

You may wonder by now just what I am driving at. I hope you do. I would be the first, by the way, to concede that thus far nothing new has been said: in fact, the evidence has been negative in nature, the tone a bit dour, the details inconclusive. And yet there is a definite objective to this elasticized memorandum: To advocate the gradual transformation, wherever feasible, of our present four-year colleges into upper-class, two year "senior colleges." In the recent past, the wide-spread acceptance of junior colleges, coupled with the current community college movement, is ample indication that localized education on the under-class level has the blessings of educators and public alike. I submit that an even greater expansion of this movement, coupled with the concurrent restriction of present four-year facilities to the limited status of "senior colleges," might well:

1. Eliminate the need for existing universities to expand already unwieldy plants,
2. Relieve the pressure on small colleges to enter upon unwise expansion programs,
3. Cut down many of the custodial functions which lie outside true academic responsibilities,
4. Minimize the non-academic activities which now infringe upon both student and institutional time and resources,
5. Permit a more selective student body in educational centers devoted to serious learning,
6. Make for a faculty happier in its curricular opportunities and intellectual challenges,
7. Return to the home community the basic tasks of screening prospective college students, seeing them through their awkward age in social and academic adjustment, and preparing them for a sound educational future in a true intellectual center,
8. And thereby bring to the "senior college" a more mature, seasoned, serious candidate for advanced study.

Beyond all these considerations, it is wholly conceivable that under such a system many relatively small colleges, relieved of their onerous under-class responsibilities, might well develop limited graduate programs in critical areas. Thus they could relieve our universities of at least a portion of their pre-professional training responsibilities in such areas as medicine and law.

Keith Fennimore
Albion College

Factors In Modern Language Mutations

Living language is constantly changing as a result of the thoughts of individuals and their contacts with others. Differences in ideas, situation, need, and activities produce such changes.

In our own society many would claim that in many cases it is not so much a matter of "mutations" as of "mutilations." Our mass media, commercial enterprises, sports, entertainments, and many more interests pour into our language new terms, new applications or connotations of terms, new idioms and phrases, and create new slang expressions. Some of these so promptly merge into the flow of daily usage that we are unconscious of their source or exactly what has happened.

Common usage, I am sure, is about to legitimize such expressions as "it's me" and "he did it like I did." Nearly everyone uses these—and powerful advertising and mass media constantly spread them. Making verbs out of such nouns as "contact" has been spurred by various commercial and social activities. Using such a verb as "travel" transitively has been aided by the commercial phrase, "travels the smoke further."

The source of such an abbreviated expression as "I want out" lies in current slang that has been prompted by popular drama. It is very common for a nationally popular moving picture star, television figure, stage notable or a successful play in one of these fields to produce a crop of new terms and expressions.

Baseball is producing an astonishing number of cryptic expressions: e.g., hit for the downs, he had a ripple, southpaw, you're out in left field, and so on. Football contributes "thrown behind the goal line,"

"he's the kind that always has someone to run interference for him," and so on. Western shows, of ancient or modern vintage, are bringing in such expressions as "dry gulching," "arroyo," and the like.

We are getting from popular entertainment and social affairs, too, such expressions as "big deal," "that's for sure," "you can say that again." One of the most thoroughly integrated and legitimized verbal expressions is "to come up with" (as with a plan).

Southern expressions such as "I'd like to die," meaning "it made me feel as if I were going to die," are spreading, as is "I'm fixing to go."

The war has given us such terms as "blitz" and recent scientific adventures have provided "fallout" and cognate terms.

Popular records of songs and ballads are another source of language mutation. These are heard and loved by so many millions that their key terms and expressions are taken over to an important extent into daily conversation, and then the impression is reinforced over radio, television, and other mass media.

One of the most interesting mutations in language terminology has to do with provincial terms for soda-fountain treats,

(Please turn to p. 6)

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such as the milk shake. In Northeast areas and elsewhere these may be termed a "frappe," abbreviated to "frap," or "cabinet," or sometimes simply an "ice-cream soda."

Soda-pop may be sold in Boston, for example, as "tonic," or in Hartford as simply "soda."

Changes in vowel sounds are also taking place. On the whole, they are becoming shorter—the American appears to dislike the broad or open sound. I have heard even "paggan" for "pagan." If you listen closely, you will find individuals shortening vowels even on common words which have remained static for a long while.

Our standard dictionaries and lexicons are going to be out of step with current usage even more rapidly than usual, for we are getting more rapid influences from so many sources—newspapers and magazines, through their stories and news; from entertainment and sports media, from social life; from popular songs; from successful books and plays; and from the favorite expressions of noted individuals.

The American version of the English language is in a rapidly changing state of flux, and it is difficult to know what is slang and what is accepted usage. If the rate of mutation increases, there may be such an invasion of the language as to endanger its purity and stability. A great deal of work needs to be done by the historian and analyst of language, the philologist and the sociologist to catalog and evaluate the changes made. We are in need of competent studies of the sociology of language in particular, and of the effects of mass media upon language terminology and expressions. The speech specialist, too, may be able to help through his careful detection of provincial and colloquial expressions and tonal changes which bring about mutations in written forms.

Modern trends are hospitable to these mutations, and much effective speaking and writing makes a practice of creating new terms or phrases—e.g., "a sleepable night."

The American penchant for abbreviating everything he can has been carried almost to excess. We of course always refer to "gas," rather than "gasoline," but strangely do not abbreviate "kerosene." In academic circles students at least take "phys. ed." and "lit.," rather than the subjects obviously referred to by this type of expression.

The psychology behind this popular development is probably that there is no particular market for the old-fashioned stiff correctness of formal language and the vigor and complexity of modern life have poured ideas, actions, concepts into so many new fields, that there is no time to stabilize expressions or maintain dignities.

It is possible that the American of the next generation, in any section of the country, may require a glossary or dictionary, if not an interpreter, to understand what we today have been talking about!

Richard K. Morton
Jacksonville Univ.

Beware World Literature

It must be admitted: teaching World Literature to college students is a dangerous act. It necessarily involves directing student attention to immorality, atheism, skepticism, blasphemy, and subversion. Let all teachers recognize that the Greeks and Romans with their *carpe diem*, Lucretius with his anti-theology, Voltaire with his *ecrasez l'infame*, Zola with his anticlericalism, and Ibsen with his huffing and puffings against the doll houses of conventional morality are encouraging wicked thoughts among the young.

Perhaps some teachers actually believe that the great spirits who challenge accepted ideas or who propose extraordinary views are the special benefactors of the world. There may even be some teachers who judge that students today, more than ever, need and deserve acquaintance with minds still brave, still audacious, still questing and challenging—that education truly defined requires the stimulation of ideas and ideals apart from the familiar and accepted.

Yet see what it leads to.

Three centuries before Christ, Euripides of Greece asserted that it is not sacrifice, but murder which the gods demand of men. Faith in God, he said, is a delusion. Two centuries later, Lucretius of Rome cried that man's life lay "foully groveling upon the ground, crushed beneath the weight of Religion." These are strong words to devout persons and clearly to the tender mind of young students. Anacreon of Greece urged mankind to be aware of the swift passage of time, the eternal death coming, and thus to enjoy the grapes of life while yet we live:

'Tis time to live, if I grow old;

'Tis time short pleasures now to

take.

This is, it will be observed, no call to repentance or reflection or prayer. In their reading of the vasty spirits of the past, students will hear the voice of Anacreon many times echoed. There is Theocritus:

Milk dry the present! Why pursue too quick

That future which is fugitive aught?

There is Montaigne: "The best fruit of my health is sensual pleasure."

Equally dreadful is the social and political thought of many of our alert and distinguished predecessors. The anarchist words of Thoreau are familiar: "That government is best which governs not at all . . . The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right . . . In fact, I quietly declare war with the State."

Bernard Shaw was even more positive: "This world, sir, is very clearly a place of torment and penance, a place where the fool flourishes and the good and wise are hated and persecuted, a place where men and women torture one another in the name of love; where children are scourged and enslaved in the name of parental duty and education; where the weak in character are put to the horrible torture of imprisonment, not for hours, but for years, in the name of justice . . . Our laws make law impossible; our property is organized robbery; our morality is an impudent hypocrisy." Nor is that all. Shaw continues: "I fully admit and vehemently urge that the State is at present simply a huge machine for robbing and slave-driving the poor by brute force . . . There is a period in life called the Age of Disillusion, which means the age at which a man discovers

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Poe
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that his honest and generous impulses are incompatible with success in business; that the institutions he has revered are shams; and that he must join the conspiracy or go to the wall."

Unforgivable as those words by Shaw are, others are even more reprehensible. In his novel *Paria*, Zola insists that the Church, the army, and big industry are in league to deceive, coerce, and subdue.

It can easily be proved that every god cherished today— theological or civil—has been dismissed (sometimes with ribald laughter, sometimes with a shrug) by men and women whose intellectual power, good will, and actual genius dwarf our own. Students will see this—and it will lead them into what we call temptation. Consider immortality. But in our sense of the word, this is what Confucius refused to consider. Indeed he believed it automatically a sign of a small mind that it ignored this earth or neglected it, and bent its thought upon extra-mundane affairs.

Consider the soul. To the sages of India who incorporated their philosophy in such a work as the *Mahabharata*, only a savage would attribute soul to man and deny it to the dog.

Consider Hell. In a passage so delicious, so winning that its charm gives it potency, Aucassin of Aucassin and Nicolette declares that Hell is far preferable to Heaven. Only the dullards, the priggish, the unhuman rise to Heaven, he says; but in Hell are the lovely women, the courteous men, the sweet-tempered, and the gracious. Could anything be more dangerous to the student who, after all, is often not quite sure that he will enjoy the entertainment of Heaven? Reading Aucassin, he may nod his head and silently think: "Heaven for climate—but Hell for company."

Consider conduct. Many of the best students have literary aspirations. It is regrettable to report that attention to the personal life of very many distinguished writers will reveal unappetizing occurrences which cannot be ignored, for they influence the theme and the method of the written work. A whole generation of Continental writers despised and violated convention. One dyed his hair green; one openly lived with a Negro woman; one thought more highly of a salamander than of a human being; one notoriously consorted with harlots; one deliberately drank himself to death. Yet, one and all, these men accomplished poignantly beautiful poetry,

or gifted criticism, or influential novels. Inevitably such men appear as models to the student who would give his life for the ability to write the imperishable poem.

Naturally, a good many geniuses led impeccable lives. Alas, even a fair number of them voice deplorable doctrine in their masterpieces. In the midst of his *Faust* Goethe informs his readers that a college professor is likely a hypocrite or coward, or both. A professor, he says, dare not teach the truth he knows. (He incidentally remarks of students that they "discourse like scholars and drink like swine.") But even Goethe is a bad example to cite, for it is sadly true that at Goethe's first and only marriage, his best man was his eldest son.

Sometimes the attacks upon custom and belief are insidious and indirect. Montaigne asserted in 1580, "it can be of no importance to me of what religion my physician or my lawyer is . . . I never inquire, when I take a footman, if he be chaste, just so he is diligent; or if my cook be a swearer, but if he be a good cook. I do not take upon me," Montaigne added, "to direct what other men should do in the government of their families (there are plenty that meddle enough with that), but only give an account of my method in my own." Furthermore he enumerated what he considered the supreme virtues of man: "goodness, freedom, gaiety, and friendship." Not a word there about orthodoxy, conformity, and dogmatism. Indeed the personal example and bright essays of Montaigne show a sociable and civilized life, where men can live in harmony with their fellows by the simple gestures of tactfulness, generosity of spirit, and mutual forbearance.

The dangers of teaching and reading World Literature are thus manifold and

((Please turn to p. 8))

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Beware World Literature

(Continued from p. 7)

manifest. Nonetheless something can be said in its favor. It is an experience that can offer genuine pleasure and vital personal and intellectual values. Through such readings, students and teachers alike can enjoy the wit and wisdom of humanity; they can become more aware, more thoughtful, and more compassionate human beings. Indeed, to be honest, our Anglo-Saxon literature contains relatively few men whose example, like that of Montaigne, inclines a reader to tolerance, skepticism, companionableness, and grace. Those who do are generally swamped with abuse. Witness the history of Bertrand Russell.

If our society needs the European spirit of the companionable Montaigne, it could also profit from Rabelais—a scholar who mocked at pedantry, a churchman who decried narrowness, a serious man but rarely a solemn one. More than this, it is Rabelais who best represents another quality for lack of which our world is grotesque, frustrate and cruel—the clear, clean acceptance of the whole life of man, spiritual, intellectual, and physical. He insisted that no life can be wholesome if it is ashamed of either mind or body. More than for decades past, Rabelais' faith in human nature and liberty, his defense of generous thought, his assertion that life is worth living, or must be made worth living, never mind about a later life, are affirmations needful for man.

Some of these ideas our students might learn, say, from Chaucer; most of this they have probably been told is rather evil than good. As Montaigne leads to a civilized society, so Rabelais leads to a healthy personal life.

Most of the major figures read in the typical course in European literature are on one or another index of prohibited

books. That may be their shame; it is also their glory.

In this regard, there rises a brave and noble man whose name is undeservedly neglected or denigrated today: Emile Zola. Zola exposed everything, he said, so that everything might be healed. He was angered by injustice, and fought it. He sacrificed his name to defend the cruelly assailed. In his novels he displayed movingly the whole panorama of life. Zola belongs in the education of all men in a society still suffering from willful blindness and inhumanity. "A task of any kind," cries the Abbe in *Paris*, "—yes, that is what is needed, together with some great passion and frank acceptance of life, so that it may be lived as it should be, and loved." To enlighten and humanize the world, this was the honorable task to which Zola dedicated himself.

The reading of many of the giants in World Literature, it is clear, is an iconoclastic, challenging, and controversial experience. Yet as one reads them he gains automatically, as an unexpected extra reward, discernments, perceptions, and tastes which construct and reconstruct character. As a consequence of the personal and intellectual values of such reading, courses in World Literature have intense import-

ance in the education of Americans.

Not all the significant works of foreign literature are controversial. Most are like the major works of our own literature—attractive, titillating, or soberly worthy. Many are of orthodoxy all compact: there is Dante, there is Calderon. But it is true that many of the mighty works of World Literature are documents of human implacability, heterodoxy, and nonconformity. Are they scandalous? They are. For the sake of mental and spiritual growth of American students, let us rejoice that they are so.

Willis D. Jacobs
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